



## FINAL PROPOSAL

*Federal Policy-Setting Process*

November 11, 2019

### Update:

Below you will find the final policy setting proposal. Please review this proposal before submitting your vote. **The voting period is November 18 - December 15, 2019 and is open to all dues-paying members of the Coalition.** Instructions on how to vote are provided at the end of this document.

Modifications to the proposal were incorporated based on written and verbal feedback provided by Coalition members, including potential affinity group members and the National Leadership Committee after a draft was released and a feedback period was conducted throughout the month of September. Young Farmers staff have also submitted comments and changes. All feedback was discussed and incorporated by the Ad Hoc Committee and approved by the Board of Directors.

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### Background:

In prior years, the National Young Farmers Coalition (Young Farmers) has created federal policy platforms and campaigns by surveying young farmers nationally and through informal feedback from our members and chapters. In 2018, we began developing a process to ensure young farmers have a formal voice in setting our federal policy platform and that our platform reflects the on-the-ground needs of our farmer-members.

In Spring 2019, Young Farmers assembled an ad hoc committee to design our new process. The committee is made up of chapter-affiliated dues-paying members from across the country, dues-paying members not affiliated with chapters, and members of the Young Farmers Board. Members nominated themselves and were then voted in by their peers to serve on the committee. Over the course of nine months, the ad hoc committee developed the process below. Development of this process was conducted in consultation with other non-profit agriculture organizations (i.e. National Farmers Union, Rural Coalition, National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition) as well as equity experts at the Anti-Oppression Resource and Training Alliance. The process included multiple meetings with the ad hoc committee, reviews from the Board, and feedback received through a member-wide survey.

Our goal is to create a democratic process for members to influence our federal policy platform. Our 501(c)3 status as an organization means that we are governed by a Board of directors which must be comprised, according to our by-laws, of more than 50% current farmers and ranchers. The Board is

responsible for oversight of the organization's financial health and legal compliance and it will engage in the federal policy setting process to ensure the resulting platform ultimately supports our organizational mission. The Board's oversight role is necessary to prevent non-compliance, avoid conflicts of interest, and enforce adherence to our organization's mission and guiding principles. Our staff will help facilitate this policy-setting process and will also serve in an oversight role to help ensure this process is compliant with legal requirements and our organization's mission.

This proposal is meant to define our policy-setting process and design the architecture for policy-setting; it will help shape the "policy book" for the organization. The implementation of these policy priorities is a separate process which we will also be refining and formalizing over the next year. It is important to note that the national organization will likely not campaign to address all policy platform items each year; rather, our platform will be a living document that the coalition will move forward with multiple campaigns. Success on any of these issues will depend on resources, member engagement, timing, and the political and policy climate. Our staff will work to effectively implement the resulting policy book with strategies that account for considerations of capacity and feasibility, and we will aim to bring more transparency to the decisions that guide our political strategy.

The policy-setting process is an important, necessary, and exciting new venture for our organization. Thanks to the robust due diligence and development that yielded this proposal, we confidently expect this proposal to succeed in creating a more democratic approach to defining our policy platform. However, we do recognize that the first-cycle of the policy-setting process is an initial iteration and we are committed to continually improving this process. The process proposed here includes an evaluation process for us to make critical changes to this process over the next two year cycle. We are committed to evolving and improving this process over the coming years.

### **Summary:**

The following policy setting process was developed by an ad hoc committee of the Young Farmers chapter representatives, at-large representatives (members not affiliated with a chapter), and Board members. Over the past nine months, the ad hoc committee, with guidance and facilitation from Young Farmers staff and Board, produced an inclusive and robust process by which we will identify our federal policy platform. The process will assess, develop, and prioritize the organization's federal policy reform efforts. Specifically, the top priorities of the ad hoc committee in developing this process were as follows:

1. **Farmers are at the center** of the policy setting process.
2. The process is **attainable**, it prioritizes feasible and achievable policy change efforts.
3. By being digestible, the process **excites and engages participation** at the grassroots level.
4. The process **uplifts marginalized voices** including BIPOC, LGBTQ+, veterans, women.
5. It ensures actions taken have a **meaningful impact**.
6. The process **builds momentum and establishes a long-term, proactive vision** for agriculture.

The process was also designed with the Young Farmers Coalition's [guiding principles](#) at the forefront.

The proposal for Young Farmers new federal policy setting process includes the creation of a **policy committee** made up of voting representatives from our membership along with 5 young farmer affinity groups. The platform will be built by the policy committee using the results of a biennial (every two years) **policy survey** and report-outs from **annual policy meetings**. The platform will be approved by dues-paying members via a democratic vote.

The **policy committee** will provide guidance on the design and feasibility of the policy survey and development of the platform. **Young Farmers staff** will develop and distribute the policy survey, analyze the results, and assess policy proposals for feasibility as well as assist in the development of the platform, and implement the platform in Washington D.C. including policy strategy, campaign planning and advocacy. Because **staff and Board** will be heavily involved in the formation of the policy platform, they will not vote on the final version. The **Board**, however, is responsible for communicating any concerns about the platform between the policy committee and the full Board.

Below is a condensed and detailed overview of each component of the process, along with visuals depicting the policy committee and timeline. The new process will be implemented beginning in 2020, with the first platform published in January 2021 to align with the new Congress. Prior to implementation, the process must be approved by a vote of the membership scheduled for November 18 - December 15, 2019. All dues-paying members are eligible to vote.

### **Policy Setting Process:**

#### **I. Policy Committee**

The federal policy development and prioritization process will be administered by a policy committee with support and guidance from Young Farmers staff. The policy committee will consist of 15 dues-paying representatives from our membership and 1 Board member.

In an effort to keep equity at the forefront of our work, Young Farmers will be forming affinity groups for members who identify as black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) within our network as well as for LGBTQ identifying members, women, veteran, and at-large members (members who are not affiliated with a chapter). Seats on the policy committee will be held solely for representatives of these affinity groups to ensure the process is equitable.

Committee members will be elected to serve for a term of two years through a self-nomination and voting process similar to the one that formed the ad hoc committee. See below for a detailed breakdown of the policy committee's membership, selection process, and operations.

- **Membership:**
  - 10 regional members. Regional members will include 2 representatives from the midwest, 2 from the northeast, 2 from the northwest, 2 from the southeast and 2 from the southwest.
    - One regional seat will be open to any Young Farmers member, regardless of chapter affiliation, and chosen by their regional peers and;
    - The other regional seat will be held for a BIPOC member of Young Farmers from that region, and chosen by the region's BIPOC affinity group membership.
  - 5 representatives from the affinity groups, chosen by each affinity group:
    - 1 member of the LGBTQ+ group,
    - 1 member of the women's group,
    - 1 member of the veteran's group, and
    - 2 members of the at-large affinity group.
  - 1 member of the Young Farmers Board, chosen by the Board. The Board member chosen to serve on the policy committee will serve as a liaison to communicate policy committee decisions back to the Board and communicate

any legal compliance concerns from the Board to the policy committee. This Board member will not have voting power on the policy committee.

- **Conditions**

- Individual committee members cannot hold multiple seats on the policy committee. For example, one person cannot serve as the midwest regional representative and the midwest BIPOC representative. Similarly, one person cannot serve as the northeast regional representative and an affinity group representative. However, this does not mean that a member of any affinity group (BIPOC, LGBTQ+, women's, veteran's, and at-large) cannot serve as a regional representative; they are welcome to self-nominate for any seat on the policy committee.
- All committee members must be dues-paying members of Young Farmers. Committee members are not required to be farmers, but will be asked to share their farming status and agricultural background in their self-nomination, which will then be shared with the Coalition for voting purposes.
- The policy committee will not be responsible for making decisions outside the scope of the federal policy platform. The sole function of this committee is to administer the process outlined in this proposal with the help of Young Farmers staff and the Board.

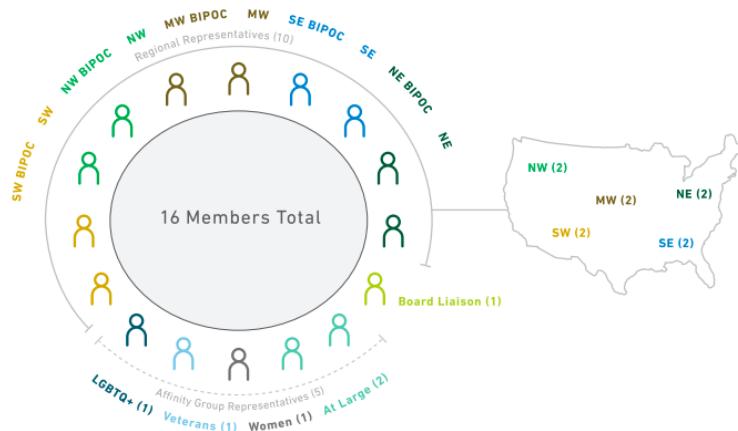
- **Selection Process:**

- Interested members will submit self-nominations to Young Farmers to be on the ballot for policy committee membership. Nominations will occur during a 4 week period at the end of the year, followed by a 2 week voting period during which affinity groups and regions vote for their respective representatives. Only midwest members (including those in affinity groups) will vote for the midwest representative. Only regional BIPOC members will vote for the BIPOC regional representatives. Only affinity group members will vote for the remaining affinity group representatives. Only dues-paying members will be eligible for self-nomination and voting. The Board member liaison will be selected by the Board.

- **Operations:**

- Policy committee members will serve 2 year terms, with a max of 3 terms. Half of the first policy committee will serve 1 year instead of 2 to stagger turnover, but will still be eligible to serve a max of 3 terms.
- Committee members will meet quarterly via conference call. The policy committee will have representation at Convergence, but the entire committee will not be required to attend. Policy committee members attending Convergence will not count as chapter delegates.
- Committee members must be present for 3 of 4 quarterly calls and the meeting at Convergence, if they have committed to attend. If 2 or more meetings are missed by a committee member (with exception for emergencies and major life events), the policy committee will consider their removal from the committee, communicate to the absent committee member, and vote on their removal. Removal will only be made by a unanimous vote of the remaining committee members. Replacements will be chosen from the self-nomination pool for the respective affinity group or region by staff until the next election takes place.

## Policy Committee



\*BIPOC = Black, Indigenous, People of Color

## II. Policy Setting Timeline

The policy setting process will be administered by the policy committee, with the help of Young Farmers staff. The platform developed by the committee will be reviewed by the Board to ensure alignment with Young Farmers' guiding principles and legal compliance. Based on the Congressional calendar, the timeline for the process will fall over two years. January 2021 will be the first year of platform implementation, aligned with the start of a "new" Congress in DC.

Even years of the process (beginning in 2020), will include the administration of a policy survey and policy meetings held by regional members and affinity groups. Results of both the survey and meetings will then be analyzed by staff and the policy committee and drafted into a policy platform. Following the first cycle of platform development, future processes will develop amendments to the standing policy platform. The initial platform as well as amendments to the platform will be presented at Convergence and then voted on by all dues-paying members electronically.

In odd years, regional members and affinity groups will hold policy meetings, but there will be no survey or amendments to the platform. These odd years will be spent drafting the survey to be administered the following year, and collecting feedback at Convergence on the process itself. Both years will include advocacy in Washington D.C. on each component laid out in the policy platform. Please see below for more details.

- **Roles:**

- The **policy committee** will provide guidance on the design and feasibility of the policy survey, and development of the platform. The committee will vote to approve the final platform, along with the Coalition's membership, and any emerging issues (see "Federal Policy Platform" below).
  - The policy committee **Board** liaison will communicate the final federal policy platform to the entire Board and report back any legal concerns or misalignment with Young Farmers guiding principles to the policy

committee. The full Board is responsible for ensuring the federal platform is aligned with the organization's mission.

- **Young Farmers staff** will develop and distribute the policy survey, analyze the results, and assess policy proposals for feasibility. Staff will also assist in the development of the platform, and implement the platform in Washington D.C. including policy strategy, campaign planning and advocacy.

- **Mechanisms:**

- **Policy Survey:** the policy setting process will include a policy survey administered every two years to dues-paying members.
- **Policy Meetings:** policy meetings of the regional members and affinity groups will be held at least annually and designed by regional members and affinity groups based on the group's needs. Staff will provide sample policy meeting questions and guidance on information to collect. Regional members and affinity groups will submit results of these meetings to Young Farmers staff by the deadline outlined below, in order for the results to be incorporated in the federal policy platform.

- **Timeline:**

- **Implementation Year 1: 2020 (and all even years)**
  - Jan 1-April 30
    - Staff distribute dues-paying membership policy survey.
    - By April 30: Regional members and affinity groups hold local policy meetings to collect feedback from membership to inform policy decisions and report results to staff.
  - May 1-October 31
    - Staff and policy committee analyze policy survey and policy meeting results and draft federal platform.
    - October: prospective policy committee members submit self-nominations for a vote.
  - November
    - Staff publish results of survey and policy meetings via email, website and social media to Coalition with draft platform.
    - Staff and policy committee present platform at Convergence.
  - November 15-December 15
    - Dues-paying membership votes on each component of the federal policy platform and their policy committee representative. Each component will need a 51% vote to be included in the final version.

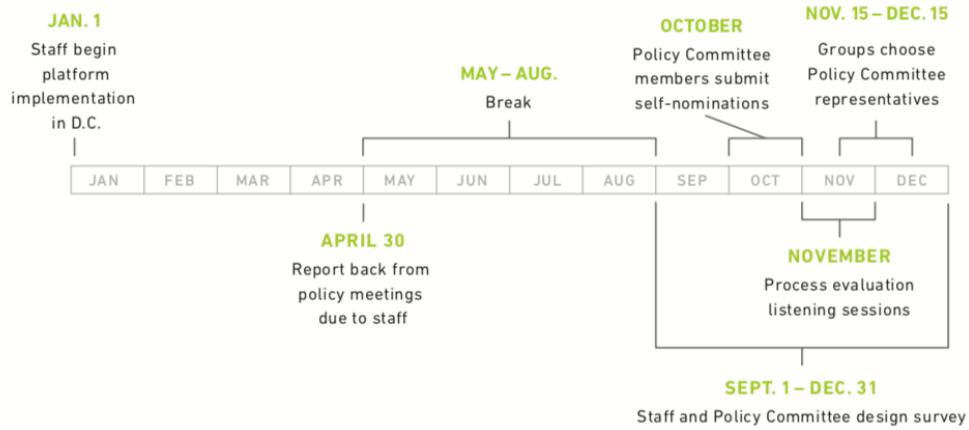
## IMPLEMENTATION YEAR 1: 2020



### ■ Implementation Year 2: 2021 (and all odd years)

- Jan 1-March 31
  - Staff releases platform and begins implementation in DC.
- By April 30:
  - Regional members and affinity groups hold local policy meetings to collect feedback from membership to inform policy decisions and report results to staff.
- September 1-December 31
  - Staff and policy committee design survey to be administered in the following year.
- October
  - Prospective policy committee members submit self-nominations for a vote.
- November
  - Federal policy setting process evaluation listening session where participants can provide feedback on the process for designing the platform.
- November 15-December 15
  - Members and affinity groups vote on new representatives to the policy committee.

## IMPLEMENTATION YEAR 2: 2021



### III. Federal Policy Platform

The federal policy platform will be made up of a maximum of five pillars, with policies included as a subsection of each pillar. It will exist as a living document, with rigorous review every two years. For issues that emerge in between policy setting sessions, there will also be an emerging issues option for ideas to be brought to the committee by staff, chapter and regional members, and affinity groups.

- Details:
  - The policy pillars and platform overall will serve as a guide to Young Farmers federal policy work. Each policy will be written with a focus on specific outcomes (such as student loan forgiveness or access to loan programs), but will allow for flexibility in strategy. Staff will be given some flexibility in navigating the details of implementation in consultation with the policy committee.
  - Staff will provide updates to the policy committee on each quarterly call to inform the members of policy developments, answer questions, and ensure federal policy efforts do so with the intent of the Coalition.
  - Policy issues may emerge after the platform is released, therefore it will also include a pathway for staff, chapter members, regional members, and affinity groups to present an emerging policy concern to the committee through a formal memo submissions process to the policy committee. These issues must be new, meaning they cannot be an issue presented in a policy meeting or survey, and not exist in any form already in the platform. Any individual can draft a memo for an emerging concern, but it must be peer-reviewed by that individual's peer group. Staff will have to present the memo to full staff before submitting, chapter members will have to present to the National Leadership Council, affinity group members will have to present to their affinity group, etc.

**Conclusion:**

Members of the ad hoc committee who shaped this proposal worked extremely hard on the formation of a democratic, farmer-focused, and inclusive federal policy setting process. Young Farmers policy staff are grateful for the opportunity to engage and support such a dedicated group of young farmers. We will continue through the implementation and improvement of this process to honor their intent, values, and priorities.

**Voting Instructions:**

Thank you for taking the time to read through our final proposal for the new federal policy setting process for Young Farmers. Now it's time to vote! **The voting period is open from November 18 - December 15, 2019 for all dues-paying members of the Coalition.**

If you are a member of Young Farmers, you have received a voting link via email. If you are not a member of Young Farmers, or your membership has expired, [here's the link to join](#). If you are not sure about your member status, reach out to Bilal ([bilal@youngfarmers.org](mailto:bilal@youngfarmers.org)).